

The Commission of 1912 discovered priceless documents in basements and attics and even in stable lofts. One of these documents was a deed designed by Louis the Fourteenth in 1651. Dust, dampness, heat and mice combined to place the records in jeopardy. The Commission also reported that there were more than twenty-four miles of shelves occupied by these records! Sixteen departments of government were making maps because there was no centralized map service.⁽¹⁾

Unfortunately the Government was slow to bring about remedial measures. Pope wrote on January 18, 1918, in a letter to Mr. A.K. MacLean, Minister without Portfolio: "As regards the recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1912 as a whole, beyond an approving Minute of Council, I do not think any steps have been taken to give them effect."⁽²⁾ It is to be remembered that the intervening years were marked by the serious pre-occupation of the war.

This reference to the development of a Public Archives system, branching out from the Secretary of State's Department, may seem to be a lengthy digression; and might have been included in the chapter on the Department of the Secretary of State. But it is inserted here as a sidelight to the archivist mind of Sir Joseph Pope, as an illustration of his administrative and clerical predilections, and his inherent concern over matters of documentation which coloured his whole conduct of the two Departments he successively headed.

(1) Blodwyn Davis: Ottawa.

(2) Pope Papers. 1918. (Doc.743).